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Mesopotamian Gods and the Bull

Los dioses mesopotámicos y el toro

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ABSTRACT:

In Mesopotamia, gods were associated with the bull from at least the Early Dynastic Period until the Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Period. This relationship took on many forms – the bull could serve as the god's divine animal, the god could be likened to the bull, or he could actually take on the form of the beast. In this paper, the various gods identified with or related to the bull will be identified and studied in order to identify which specific types of god were most commonly and especially associated with the bull. The relationships between the gods and the bull are evident in textual as well as iconographic sources, although fewer instances of this connection are found in iconography. Examples of the portrayal of the association between the various gods and the bull in texts and iconography can be compared and contrasted in order to reveal differences and similarities in these portrayals.

KEYWORDS: Gods, Mesopotamia, Bull, Iconography, Text sources.

RESUMEN:

En Mesopotamia, los dioses fueron asociados al toro desde por lo menos el período Protodinástico hasta la época neo-babilónica o caldea. Esta relación adoptó muchas modalidades: el toro podía servir como el animal divino del dios, la divinidad era comparada con el toro o, quizás, hasta podía adoptar la forma misma del animal. En este artículo, son identificados y estudiados los distintos dioses relacionados con el toro a fin de reconocer qué deidades fueron asociadas con más frecuencia al bóvido. Los vínculos entre los dioses y el toro son evidentes tanto en fuentes textuales como iconográficas, aunque se cuenta con menos ejemplos de esta conexión en este último tipo de registro. Los ejemplos de la representación de la asociación entre los diversos dioses y el toro en las inscripciones y la iconografía se pueden comparar y contrastar con el fin de revelar diferencias y similitudes en estas representaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Dioses, Mesopotamia, Toro, Iconografía, Fuentes textuales.

1. INTRODUCTION

The bull was associated with a variety of Mesopotamian gods. More than one god was associated with the bull, which, as Ornan (2001, p. 25) points out, “does not contradict ancient Near Eastern religious concepts, as polytheistic theology conceived the world as being simultaneously governed by several divine entities”. These entities could govern the same or similar spheres, and could be associated with the same objects and attributes. If the bull was associated with more than one god, it must be because characteristics of the bull could be compared and likened to those of the different gods. In this regard, Watanabe (2002, p. 89-106) identifies a number of ways in which the bull was used in divine contexts: the bull could be used to express warlike qualities associated with a god, to express aspects of storm, and to express various types of fertility, be that agricultural or sexual. There was though considerable overlap between these, with, for example, the storm also expressing both martial and fertility aspects. The bull could therefore broadly be associated with power, authority and strength, and with fertility.

The bull could also be both a symbol and an attribute of a god (Seidl 2011-13, p. 180). Gods could be associated with bulls in three ways: They could be represented as a bull, in other words taking the physical form of a bull, or they could be represented like a bull, taking on or embodying certain characteristics associated with the bull, or they could be represented as having some relationship with cattle.

This paper will look at the different gods which are symbolized by and associated with the bull, and analyse how these relationships were manifested in both textual and visual sources. This will be done in order to determine whether there is consistency in the manner in which the gods are associated with the bull. This will entail both looking at how the bull and the individual gods were associated, and with which aspects of the bull these gods were identified.

2. CATTLE GODS

The most obvious gods to be associated with the bull are Cattle Gods. La#ar and Šakkan were cattle gods in Sumerian mythology, but there do not appear to be iconographic depictions of either god. According to a debate poem¹ relayed by Kramer (1972, p. 52), Lah#ar, the cattle god, and his sister Ašnan, the grain goddess, were created so that the Anunnaki would have food and clothing. La#ar and Ašnan descend to earth and begin arguing, each one proclaiming the advantages of their gifts and belittling those of the other. Enki and Enlil intervene and declare Ašnan to be the winner. There is, however, uncertainty over the identity of Lah#ar in this narrative. For example, Leick (1998, p. 109) identifies Lah#ar as a cattle goddess rather than a god, while according to Lambert (1980-1983, p. 431) this deity is a “god of flocks”.² Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi (2006, p.227) and Middleton (2005, p. 156-157) further both identify Lah#ar as female and as the personification of Sheep, rather than associated with cattle. Whatever the gender identity of Lah#ar in the debate poem, in the *Theogony of Dunnu*³, Lah#ar is the son of Šakkan, and therefore male. The *Theogony of Dunnu* describes both the founding of the town Dunnu and the genealogy of its deities. In this narrative, Lah#ar kills his father and marries his mother, and in turn is killed by his son. Neither the strength and power nor the fertility of the bull therefore seem to be associated with Lah#ar in these texts, although as a deity of the herds or flocks, he may be associated with fertility.

Šakkan, Lah#ar’s father, also appears to have been a Sumerian cattle god and was also known as Sumuqan (Wiggermann 2011-13, p. 308). As with Lah#ar, his sphere of influence is not entirely certain. Lines 94-95 of a *šir-namursağa to Ninsiana for Iddin-Dagan (Iddin-Dagan A)* (ETCSL 2.5.3.1⁴), mentions “the numerous beasts of Šakkan, the creatures of the plain, the four-legged animals”, suggesting that this god was not only associated with cattle, but also with other quadrupeds. In this regard, he is also referred to as “the lord of donkeys” in line 41 of a *šir-namšub to Ninurta (Ninurta G)* (ETCSL 4.27.07⁵). In the *Theogony of Dunnu* Šakkan marries his mother, Earth, and kills his father, H#a’in, perhaps to be identified as Heaven (Lambert 2013:387), and later marries his sister, Sea, and is killed by his son Lah#ar. In line 33 of a *Dedication of a statue to Išme-Dagan (Išme-Dagan S, line 33)* (ETCSL 2.5.4.19⁶), Šakkan is mentioned with Enki, Iškur and Ezina as “the lords of abundance”. He therefore appears to be associated with fertility, and it is this aspect of the bull with which he is associated, if he is a cattle god.

Ningublaga, the son of the moon god Nanna, was also a cattle god (Cavigneaux and Krebern timer 1998-2001, p. 374). In *An adab to Ningublaga for Iddin-Dagan (Iddin-Dagan c)* (ETCSL 2.5.3.3⁷) he is repeatedly referred to by his epithet “vigorous wild bull”. This *adab* praises his power, as for example in lines 16-17, “Vigorous wild bull, you flatten those mountains and turn them over to ghostly winds. You make their young warriors submit, no longer able to enter into battle.” Therefore, although cattle gods were more commonly associated with fertility, the bull’s strength and power are emphasized in the poems in which Ningublaga is identified with the bull.

3. DUMUZI

Dumuzi was the husband of Inanna, and can be linked to the cattle gods through his role as a shepherd, being associated with and caring for domesticated animals. Although never depicted as a bull in the visual repertoire, he is associated with the bull in a variety of ways in the textual sources. For example, his name is often preceded by the epithet ‘Wild Bull’ which was a Sumerian metaphor for ‘shepherd’ (Sefati, 1998, p. 76). In this regard, according to Jacobsen (1976, p.44) the title ‘shepherd’ probably originally meant ‘cowherd’. This appears to be the case in texts like a Song of Inanna and Dumuzi (Dumuzid-Inana V) (ETCSL 4.08.22⁸), in which Inanna “goes to the shepherd in the sheepfold, goes to Dumuzid in the cattle-pen”. This relationship between ‘Wild Bull’ and ‘shepherd’ can be seen in *The Wild Bull Who Has Lain Down*, which recounts Dumuzi’s death,

*“The wild bull who has lain down, lives no more,
the wild bull who has lain down,
lives no more,
Dumuzi, the wild bull, who has lain down,
lives no more,
...the chief shepherd, lives no more,
the wild bull who has lain down, lives no more...”*

Source: (Jacobsen, 1976, p. 53).

A number of poems and songs recount the love and marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi. These are often expressed in pastoral terms and Dumuzi is often likened to a wild bull. In these texts it is Dumuzi’s virility which is compared to that of a bull. In *The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi* Inanna tells how “I bathed for the wild bull, I bathed for the shepherd Dumuzi” (Wolkenstein & Kramer 1983, p. 44). Similarly, lines 8-9 of Segment B of a *balbale* (?) to Inana (Dumuzid-Inana P) (ETCSL 4.08.16⁹), Inanna describes how “My bridegroom rejoices beside me, the {wild bul}{(I ms. has instead:) lord} Dumuzid rejoices beside me.” In lines 20-21 of Segment C of the same *balbale*, another aspect Dumuzi’s role as pastoral god is represented. In these lines, Inanna sings, “Wild bull Dumuzid, make the milk yellow for me, and I will drink the milk with you, my bridegroom!” According to Wiggermann (2010, p. 328), “‘shepherd’ and ‘lover’ are Dumuzi’s defining characteristics in the texts”. These both refer to aspects of fertility and abundance, and can be associated with Dumuzi also through his epithet Wild Bull.

4. THE STORM GODS

The Storm God, identified in the visual repertoire by the forked lightning he holds, was also associated with the bull in both texts and images. According to Watanabe (2002, p. 92, 97-98), the Akkadian words for the noise of thunder and the bellowing of a bull are the same, thereby linking the god associated with the storm and the bull. This god was known as Iškur in Sumerian and as Adad in Akkadian. Storm clouds were referred to as Adad’s ‘bull-calves’ (Black & Green, 1992, p. 111). According to Bienkowski and Millard (2000, p.2), Iškur’s animal was the lion-dragon, while Adad’s was the bull. Schwemer (2001, p. 124-126) demonstrates that the association of the Storm God with the bull is not originally Sumerian, but rather that it is first encountered during the Akkadian Period, and becomes popular during the Old Babylonian Period. While usually associated with the lion, Iškur is described in one text as “the great ox who is radiant, the lord who mounts the storm, who mounts a great lion, producing grain” (Leick, 1998, p. 95). Iškur had certain similarities with the agricultural and rain god Ninurta: they were both represented as warrior gods who drove their chariots across the sky (Jacobsen, 1976, p. 135). Green (2003, p.23) argues that during the Ur III period

Ninurta was associated with the lion, while Adad was associated with the bull. Ninurta though is associated with the bull in Sumerian texts. For example, in line 32 of *Ninurta's exploits: a šir-sud (?) to Ninurta* (ETCSL 1.6.2¹⁰), he is compared to a bull, “[m]y hero, you are like a bull”. In other texts, he is not only likened to the bull, but his epithets associate him with the bull, as for example in a *šir-gida to Ninurta (Ninurta A)* (ETCSL 4.27.01¹¹) “Ninurta, the fierce bull”. In these texts the association between Ninurta and the bull may reflect the god's role as a Storm God with his fertilizing rains, but it appears more likely that it is the strength and power of the bull with which Ninurta is associated. This is also made evident in lines 1-4 of a *tigi (?) to Ninurta for Šu-Suen (Šu-Suen D)* (ETCSL 2.4.4.4¹²) in which Ninurta is associated with both the lion and the bull,

“Ancient warrior, greatly respected and forceful, with the strength of a full-grown lion! Ninurta, flood, great lion, fierce opponent in battle! Mighty one, who the enemy peoples, destroyer of cities, who turns the settlements into dust! Ninurta, great wild bull, a battering ram who great walls!”

In this regard, Green (2003, p.23) argues that Storm Gods were associated with lions when their power, authority and strength were meant to be shown, while they were associated with bulls when the focus was on their fertility. While this may generally be the case, in the above *tigi* it is clear that Ninurta's power is being praised when he is associated with both the bull and the lion. Furthermore, Enlil, who has aspects of a Storm God, is compared to a bull in line 3 of *The Curse of Agade* (ETCSL 2.1.5¹³) which states that he (Enlil) “had slaughtered the house of the land of Unug in the dust as if it were a mighty bull”¹⁴. In this case it is Enlil's personification of the force and violence of the storm which are compared to a great bull. In comparison, in the *Debate between Summer and Winter* (ETCSL 5.3.3¹⁵), Enlil copulates with the mountains to produce Summer and Winter, and “[a]s Enlil copulated with the earth there was a roar like a bull's” (lines 13-14). Jacobsen (1976, p. 104) understands this to mean that Enlil, in the form of a huge bull, copulates with Ninhursag. Therefore, when Enlil is presented as a bull, it is both his fertility and his force which are emphasized. It appears then that in texts the bull represented the Storm God's aspect of fertility as well as his divine strength and power.

The association between the bull and the Storm God is first attested in the visual repertoire during the Old Babylonian period when forked lightning, symbolizing the god, rested on the back of the beast. The bull could be either standing or recumbent. On the fourth register of the *kudurru* of the Kassite ruler Meli-Shipak II, now housed in the Louvre (Sb 22), Adad is symbolized by two-forked lightning which stands on a platform on the back of a bull (figure 1). In examples such as this, the bull and the symbol of the god are represented, although the Storm God himself is not. In other examples, the bull supported the Storm God himself. Occasionally he is shown standing with one foot resting on the back of a small bull, but more commonly the Storm God is depicted standing on the bull. For example, on the Stele of Adad from the Temple of Ištar at Arslan Tash¹⁶, now housed in the Louvre (AO13092) (figure 2), Adad is depicted holding three-forked lightning in either hand and standing in the smiting pose on the back of a bull. The Stele of Esarhaddon from Zincirli, and now in the Vorderasiatische Museum (VA 2708), depicts the Esarhaddon with a rope which is threaded through the lips of two vanquished kings. Above these kings are representations of symbols of the gods. As on the Stele of Adad, on the Esarhaddon Stele, Adad is shown as a god holding three-forked lightning and standing on a bull.

Figure 1: Stele of Meli-Shipak (detail)



(Photograph taken by the author at the Louvre, Paris, April 2010)

Figure 2: Stele of Adad from Arslan Tash



(Photograph taken by the author at the Louvre, Paris, April 2010)

As well as being depicted with the Storm God or with the forked lightning of the Storm God, the bull sometimes stood as an expression of Adad, and was used to represent the god. Under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, the city of Babylon was rebuilt. The famous Processional Street and the Ištar Gate, through which it passed, were lined with glazed blue bricks decorated with golden reliefs of animals sacred to the gods. The lion, Ištar's sacred animal, interestingly does not decorate the Ištar Gate but is found instead on the Processional Way. The walls of the Ištar Gate have alternating rows of dragons, which were sacred to Marduk, the god of the state and city, and bulls, which were symbolic of Adad (figure 3). The gateway had bronze-plated cedar doors and bronze statues of bulls and dragons (Kunze, Jakob-Rost, Klengel-Brandt, Marzahn & Warkte, 1995, p. 50). The bull was therefore associated with the Storm God in three ways in the visual repertoire. The bull could either be depicted with forked lightning, the symbol of the Storm God, on its back, or it could be depicted with the Storm God on its back, or the bull could represent the Storm God, although in this case the bull should not be considered as being the Storm God.

Figure 3: Bull representing Adad from the Ištar Gate of Babylon



(Photograph taken by the author at the Vorderasiatische Museum, Berlin, June 2007)

5. THE MOON GOD

Inscriptions from the Old Babylonian Period inform us that the crescent moon was identified with the Moon God Sin (Black & Green, 1992, p. 54). The horns of the bull came to signify the crescent of the moon, which lies almost horizontally, like the horns of the bull, in the skies of Mesopotamia (Black *et al.*, 2006, p. 145). The bull, the crescent moon, and the Moon God therefore became associated with each other. In Sumerian the Moon God was known as Nanna, Suen, or sometimes as Nanna-Suen. In Akkadian he was called Sin. His epithets included *ašimbabbar*, which means ‘the luminous’, referring to the bright moon, *amar*, which means ‘calf’, and *amar-ban3-da den-lil-a*, which means ‘young calf of Enlil’ (Leick, 1998, p. 126). Not only was this god likened to a bull calf, in literary works he was commonly portrayed as one (Black *et al.*, 2006, p. 145). A hymn to Sin begins, “Proud bull calf with thick horns and perfect proportions, with a lapis beard, full of virility and abundance” (Cashford, 2003, p. 104). This hymn associates the Moon God with fertility, but also reveals the reason why the Moon God was associated with the bull – the shape of the bull’s horns reflected the shape of the crescent moon. This relationship is highlighted in other texts which explicitly associate the horns and the light of the Moon God, such as line 13 of a *hymn to Suen for Ibbi-Suen (Ibbi-Suen E)* (ETCSL 2.4.5.5¹⁷) which describes “with shining horns, the light of heaven, youthful Suen”.

Associated with cattle herds, and with agricultural fertility in general, Nanna was also worshipped as the patron deity of herdsmen (Rice 1998, p. 92). According to Jacobsen (1976, p. 124), he was originally envisaged as a bull, but in time his human form came to dominate and he became the ‘cowherd’. This is reflected in various texts, such as the opening passage of a *balbale to Nanna (Nanna A)* (ETCSL 4.13.01¹⁸) which praises the god as a herdsman taking care of his cows. This role is further explored in *The herds of Nanna (Nanna F)* (ETCSL 4.13.06¹⁹).

The bull is also associated with the Moon God in the visual repertoire, particularly through the crescent. The crescent standard was associated with the Moon God from the Early Dynastic Period, and is perhaps best known as the standard of Sin of Harran²⁰. During the Early Dynastic Period a cylinder seal depicts a crescent standard which is supported by a stand with feet in the form of hoofs (NBC 2589)²¹, directly associating this standard with cattle. The earliest known example of the crescent standard comes not from Mesopotamia, but from Chogha Mish on a seal impression in which the crescent standard is held by a figure who is seated in a boat behind a larger figure who is seated on a bull²². This larger figure may represent the Moon God, both because of the crescent standard and the bull with which he is associated. However, because this seal impression is Proto-Elamite, from ancient Iran, and not from Mesopotamia, it appears that the association of the Moon God both with the crescent standard and with the bull may originate outside of Mesopotamia.

The Moon God is associated with the bull not only through the crescent standard, but also with the crescent. On an Early Dynastic whitestone plaque found in the Inanna Temple at Nippur²³ (7N415) a

crescent moon is found just above the depiction of the bull (figure 4), demonstrating that there was already a connection between the bull and the moon at this period. Two bulls' heads from a copper frieze which decorated the Early Dynastic Temple of Ninhursag at Ubaid in southern modern-day Iraq (BM 118015) displayed a crescent on their foreheads²⁴ (figure 5), further identifying them with the moon, and by extension with the Moon God. The crescent moon, the bull and the Moon God were then already associated with each other as early as the Early Dynastic Period.

Figure 4: Whitestone plaque from Nippur



Ornan 2001:4 figure 2

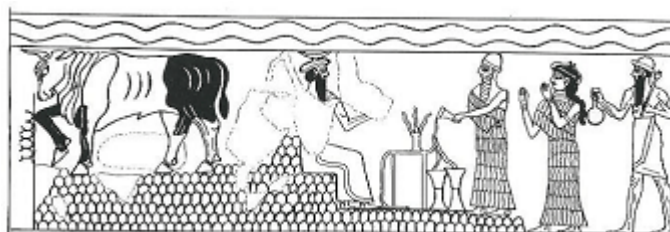
Figure 5: Bull's head from Ubaid



(Photograph taken by the author at the British Museum, London, May 2006)

A wall painting from Room 132 of the Palace at Mari shows an enormous black bull behind the Moon God, identifiable by the crescent on the top of his headdress, who is seated on a throne (figure 6) (Matthews, 1997, p. 149). The bull and Moon God are a scale pattern which symbolizes the mountains, which, according to Ornan (2001, p.12) "in Mesopotamian iconography implies a heavenly setting". According to Burnett and Keel (1999, p.35) the black bull may embody the night time mountains. What is clear is that the bull is associated with the Moon God.

Figure 6: Wall painting from Mari



(Burnett & Keel, 1998, fig. 45)

Baked clay plaques have been found with depictions of two crossed bulls (Israel Museum 99.81.10) (figure 7). Between the bulls is a crescent mounted on a conical base. That the crescent symbolizes the Moon God

is supported by cylinder seals depicting a god who is holding a crescent on a pole, and is standing on two crossed bulls. One such cylinder seal, from the Old Babylonian Period, depicts the Moon God standing on two recumbent bulls as well as the Storm God standing on one bull (figure 8). The bull therefore must have been recognized to be representative of both gods (Ornan, 2001, p. 15).

Figure 7: Plaque with crossed bulls



(Ornan, 2001, fig. 10)

Figure 8: Old Babylonian seal impression with both the Storm God and the Moon God standing on bulls



(Bernett & Keel, 1998, fig. 46)

Two stamp seals from the eighth or seventh century, one from Nineveh (figure 9) and one of unknown provenance (figure 10), depict a bull and a crescent on a pole, representing the Moon God. The crescent on the pole appears to stand on the bull's back, much like the lightning which was symbolic of the Storm God (Ornan, 2001, pp. 19-21).

Figure 9: Stamp seal from Nineveh



(Ornan, 2001, fig. 14 [detail])

Figure 10: Stamp seal of unknown provenance



(Ornan, 2001, fig. 15 [detail])

6. OTHER IMPORTANT MESOPOTAMIAN GODS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BULL

While the Cattle, Storm and Moon gods were the most important gods which were associated with the bull, they were not the only ones. The bull was identified not only with the Moon God, but also with the Sun God, Utu in Sumerian and Šamaš in Akkadian. It was only during the Neo-Assyrian Period that the Sun God was associated with the bull in the visual repertoire when he is depicted standing on a bull (Kurmangaliev 2009-2011, p. 62). More commonly he was associated with the hybrid bull-man, the *gud.alim*, or “Bison-Bull”, which represented the distant lands to which he travelled (Green, 1995, p. 1867). According to Kreberník (2009-2011, p. 604) the relationship between the Sun God and the bull-man may be linked to the association of the god with the wild bulls in an Early Dynastic hymn. This association of the Sun God with the bull is also found in other texts. In line 7 of an *adab* (?) to Utu for Šulgi (Šulgi Q) (ETCSL 2.4.2.17²⁵), Utu is described as “[t]he great wild bull, youthful Utu, who like a torch illuminates the Land from the holy heavens”. In the Gilgamesh epic Šamaš depicted as a bull. In Tablet IV of the Gilgamesh epic Enkidu explains a dream of Gilgamesh’s,

*“The [god,] my friend, we are going against,
he’s not the wild bull, he’s different altogether.
The wild bull you saw was shining Šamaš,
he will grasp our hands in time of peril”*

Source: (George, 2003, p. 37).

In lines 374-375 of *Enki and the World Order* (ETCSL 1.1.3²⁶), Utu is described as “the hero, the bull who comes of the *h#ašur* forest, bellowing truculently, the youth Utu, the bull standing triumphantly, audaciously, majestically”. This suggests that it was the fearsome power of the bull with which the Sun God was associated.

Enki was one of the highest gods of the Sumerian pantheon. His name meant “Lord Earth”, and he was associated with water, particularly the sweet water of the *Apsu*. Because of this association, Enki was also linked to fertility (Leick, 1998, p. 40). Although not generally or consistently associated with the bull, there are examples of such an association. In line 13 of an *adab* (?) to Enki for Išme-Dagan (Išme-Dagan D) (ETCSL 2.5.4.04²⁷), Enki is called “Nudimmud, great bull of the abzu”, and in line 17 of *The Lament for Ur* (ETCSL 2.2.2²⁸), Enki is called the “wild bull of Eridug”. The fertility aspect of the bull associated with Enki is demonstrated in lines 252-254 of *Enki and the World Order* (ETCSL 1.1.3²⁹), “he stood up full of lust like a rampant bull, lifted his penis, ejaculated and filled the Tigris with flowing water”. The god is also found in

association with bulls on cylinder seals. The Akkadian greenstone cylinder seal of Adda (BM 89115) contains a depiction of Ea, the Akkadian equivalent of Enki, with his foot upon a bull.

An/Anu was the sky god and “the father and ancestor of all the gods” (Jacobsen, 1976, p. 95), making him one of the most important gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon. He was called “Fecund Bull”, a reference to the fertility of the sky as the source of rain (Leick, 1998, p. 6). In line 2 of *Enki and the World Order* (ETCSL 1.1.3³⁰), Enki, An’s son, is described “engendered by a bull, begotten by a bull”. These references suggest that it was the aspect of fertility of the bull with which An/Anu was associated when he was likened to a bull.

In line 3 of *Pabilsağ’s journey to Nibru* (ETCSL 1.7.8³¹) the titular god, who was the city deity of Larak, is described as “Pabilsağ, the wild bull with brindled thighs, whose house is noble!” In lines 13-15 of the same narrative, Pabilsağ is described as being “like a scorpion rising up from among the thorns, he is a fearsome scorpion; like a wolf rising up from his lair, he is likely to growl; like a lion rising up in the pathway, he is likely to beat.....”, and in line 30 he is called “Warrior Pabilsağ”. Here the god’s martial aspects are exemplified, and his awesome power and strength are described, and it appears then that his association with the bull may reflect a similar idea.

7. CONCLUSIONS

A variety of Mesopotamian gods were therefore associated with the bull, and particularly associated with aspects of fertility and power associated with the bull. This was done primarily through textual evidence, and particularly through the use of epithets identifying a certain god with the bull. Of the gods associated with the bull, the Moon God is unique in that it appears that the relationship between the bull and this god is primarily through the physical comparison between the crescent moon and the shape of the horns of the bull, and not through the fertility or power associated with the bull. This is evident both in the textual and visual evidence. One hymn though does associate the Moon God with fertility, and he was the patron deity of herdsmen. Indeed, his role as a herdsman and his taking care of his own cattle is explored in numerous works.

Similarly to the Moon God in his role as patron deity of herdsmen, the Cattle Gods, Ningublaga, La#ar and Šakkan, if the latter two are indeed Cattle Gods, can also be associated with herds. In their role as Cattle Gods, they could logically be linked to fertility. However, only Šakkan is explicitly associated with fertility in texts, and when Ningublaga is identified with the bull, it is the bull’s strength and power which are emphasized, and not its fertility. In contrast, Dumuzi, who can be linked to the Cattle Gods through his role as a shepherd, is associated with the fertility of the bull, and not with its strength.

The Storm God appears to be primarily associated with the power of the bull, identifiable with the thundering storm and the bellowing of the bull. The fertility associated with the bull does not appear to be explicitly manifested in the Storm God, although this may have been implied through the fertilizing rains associated with the storm. The Storm God is also the only god who is consistently associated with the bull in the visual repertoire. This was achieved in three ways: forked lightning, the symbol of the Storm God, could be mounted on the back of the bull, the Storm God himself could stand on the back of the bull, or the bull could be symbolic or representative of the bull. The Storm God though is not depicted as the bull.

Other gods were also associated with the bull. For example, the Sun God was depicted in the visual repertoire as standing on the back of the bull, much like the Storm God. In texts it appears that it is the power of the bull with which the Sun God is associated. The same is true for Pabilsağ, it is his martial aspects which are emphasized, linking him to the strength and power of the bull. On the other hand, both Enki and An appear to be associated with the fertility of the bull. This is particularly obvious of Enki in *Enki and the World Order* where this god ejaculates into the Tigris River.

None of these gods though are depicted in the form of the bull, unless Jacobsen’s (1976, p. 104) understanding of the *Debate between Summer and Winter* in which Enlil, as a bull, copulates with Ninhursag. It is more likely though that Enlil is represented as being like a bull, and in manifesting the fertility of the

bull, in this passage. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* where Šamaš is represented in the form of a bull, it is in a dream relayed by Gilgamesh to Enkidu, and Enkidu needs to interpret the bull to represent the Sun God. The Sun God is not routinely depicted as a bull. Therefore gods were represented like the bull, and as being associated with herds, but not in the form of the bull.

The association between the bull and Mesopotamian gods is compelling, but the manner in which individual gods are associated with fertility or strength of the bull are not consistent. For example the Cattle Gods could logically have been thought to be linked with the fertility of the bull, but instead Ningublaga is associated with the brute strength of the bull. The Storm Gods, through devastating storms, were associated with the forceful power of the bull, but not with the fertilizing rains which accompany the storm. However, all the gods are associated with either fertility or with power and authority through the bull.

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NOTES

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- 1 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.5.3.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.5.3.2#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.5.3.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.5.3.2#>.
 - 2 In other words, a god of flocks of sheep, rather than of herds of cattle.
 - 3 For a transcription, English translation, and discussion on this text, see Lambert (2013, p. 387-395).
 - 4 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.5.3.1 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.5.3.1#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.5.3.1 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.3.1#>.
 - 5 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.27.07 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.27.07#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.27.07 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.27.07#>.
 - 6 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.5.4.19 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.5.4.19#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.5.4.19 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.4.19#>.
 - 7 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.5.3.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.5.3.3#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.5.3.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.3.3#>.
 - 8 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.08.22 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.08.22#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.08.22 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.08.22#>.
 - 9 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.08.16 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.08.16#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.08.16 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.08.16#>.
 - 10 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.1.6.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.6.2#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.1.6.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.2#>.
 - 11 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.27.01 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.27.01#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.27.01 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.27.01#>.
 - 12 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.4.4.4 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.4.4.4#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.4.4.4 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.4.4.4#>.
 - 13 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.1.5 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.1.5#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.1.5 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.5#>.
 - 14 Enlil is also described as “the Bull to his sanctuary”, “a sturdy mountain bull”, “wild bull”, and “a sturdy bull art thou” (Bienkowski & Millard, 2000, p. 105; Wainwright, 1933, p. 44).
 - 15 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.5.3.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.5.3.3#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.5.3.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.5.3.3#>.
 - 16 Although Arslan Tash is situated in modern day northern Syria and was the centre of an Aramaean Iron Age kingdom, this kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in the ninth century, and this stele reflects Assyrian iconography. Similarly, the Stele of Esarhaddon (discussed below), although found in Zincirli southeastern Anatolia, also reflects Assyrian iconography. The two pieces can therefore discuss as Mesopotamian artefacts.
 - 17 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.4.5.5 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.4.5.5#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.4.5.5 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.4.5.5#>.
 - 18 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.13.01 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.13.01#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.13.01 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.13.01#>.
 - 19 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.4.13.06 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.13.06#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.4.13.06 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.13.06#>.
 - 20 For the crescent standard’s association with the moon god Sin of Harran during the Assyrian Period, see Ornan (2005, p. 163-167) and Cornelius (2014, p. 155-159).
 - 21 See Buchanan (1981, p. 127 Catalogue Number 338) for this seal.
 - 22 See Collon (2005, p. 159 Catalogue Number 712) for this seal impression.
 - 23 The upper register of this plaque is only register which survives in its entirety.

- 24 The temple probably dates to the reign of A-anepada of the First Dynasty of Ur around 2500 (Leick, 2002, p. 1). It is possible that other bulls' heads from the frieze contained a crescent on their foreheads, but they are generally too corroded to be certain.
- 25 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.4.2.17 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.4.2.17#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.4.2.17 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.4.2.17#>.
- 26 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.1.3#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3#>.
- 27 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.5.4.04 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.5.4.04#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.5.4.04 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.4.04#>.
- 28 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.2.2.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.2.2#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.2.2.2 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.2.2#>.
- 29 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.1.3#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3#>.
- 30 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.1.3#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.1.1.3 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3#>.
- 31 For a transliteration of this text, see ETCSL c.1.7.8 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.7.8#>, and for an English translation see ETCSL t.1.7.8 online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.7.8#>.